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AUTHOR Novak, John M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the developement of invitational learning and argues that it has become more precise and applicable as a result of critiques from within. Next, the current invitational model with its "wide-lens" focus is critiqued from its inability to go deeper into the implications of educating: teaching, learning, curriculum, and governance. Building on these distinct commonplaces, a theory of practice emphasizing educative events is presented. For invitations to be brought down to earth for teachers, and for the inviting process to remain pedagogically fresh, a more sensitive model is needed. An inviting theory of educational practice is proposed, informed by the concept of caring developed by Nel Noddings (1983), by the helping relations, and by the social-judgmental nature of knowledge suggested by Richard Bernstein (1983). (Author/JD)

Invitational Teaching for Mere Mortals

by

John M. Novak

College of Education
Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario
Canada, L2S 3A1

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John M. Novak
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Abstract

This paper traces the development of invitational education and argues that it has become more precise and applicable as a result of critiques from within. Next, the current invitational model with its "wide-lens" focus is critiqued from the perspective of its inability to go deeper in the "stuff" of educating: teaching, learning, curriculum, and governance. Building on these distinct commonplaces, a theory of practice emphasizing inviting educative events is presented. Special attention is paid to the implications of Nel Noddings' Caring and Richard Bernstein's Beyond objectivism and relativism as ways to get closer to and beyond the present intentions in invitational education.

"You speak like an angel Mr. Washington.
It's too bad we are living on the earth."

(Coalhouse Walker to Booker T. Washington,
"Ragtime", Paramount Pictures)

Introduction

In getting down to earth about invitational education for teachers, it is necessary to begin with a critical analysis of the present paradigm used. Criticism of invitational education is often guilt producing. With its emphasis on an optimistic vision and practicality a critic gets the feeling that he or she is a bit crusty in attempting to cast aspersions on the greatest thing since sliced bread. However, even the convenience of sliced bread is not without its limitations: the bread often needs to be mass produced and specifically shaped to fit the automatic cutter, thus losing its distinct features; and it tends to get stale rather quickly. This paper will argue that the present paradigm for inviting unintentionally runs these same risks when it is applied to teaching. It will be argued that a context specific model emphasizing the nature of educative events is necessary to work through and beyond the limitations of the present paradigm. Let's first look at the development of the present paradigm.

Brief History

The inviting approach to teaching developed as a response to the basic question, "What's an educator supposed to be about?". From the humanistic tradition the inviting perspective developed from, and which

was philosophically opposed to mechanistic and authoritarian approaches, the answer has gone from (a) humanizing the classroom, to (b) developing self-concept, to (c) inviting school success. A quick look at the development of each of these phases is needed.

In the late 1960's, at the College of Education at the University of Florida, the question "What are teachers supposed to be about?" was answered by a group led by Art Combs with a resounding "Teachers are supposed to be about humanizing the classroom!". This became the battle cry for the Centre for Humanistic Education, whose purpose was to do good things and fight anti-humanistic activities in whatever form they appeared in schools. But alas, the concept of "humanizing" was eventually seen to be simultaneously too vague and contentious for use, and thus there was a shift in focus to "developing self-concept". This was a logical and practical move because self-concept was a crucial aspect of the perceptual tradition (Snygg and Combs, 1949; Combs and Snygg, 1959) and a significant and sustained correlation was found between self-concept and school achievement (Purkey, 1970). With this in mind the crucial job of teaching was to help develop positive self concepts. However, upon ethical and conceptual analysis it became clear that someone psychologically cannot, and ethically should not, attempt to develop another's self concept, their personal view of who they are and how they fit in the world. This is something that cannot be done, and, even if it could, should not be done. Thus in 1978 the notion of "inviting school success" (Purkey) came into existence. This notion, emphasizing the importance of self concept as learner, stressed the essential nature of a "doing with" relationship between teacher and student, pointing out the teacher's power in sending inviting messages but being limited by, and respecting, the student's right to accept,

reject or hold in abeyance the messages extended. Levels and skills of inviting were also suggested in this text. Recently, this concept was extended to include the reciprocal nature of invitations, the necessity for both professional and personal invitations to oneself and others, and the insistance that inviting and disinviting messages are also extended through physical environments, school programs, and school policies (Purkey and Novak, 1984). Future plans include the development of an invitational model to be applied in a wide variety of settings (Purkey and Schmidt, in progress). More will be said about this in the next section.

A quick historical observation. The inviting theory of practice developed out of an attempt to define, encourage, and sustain positive activities in the classroom. In the beginning it was clearer in what it was against (mechanistic and authoritarian ways of treating people) than what it was for. Over the years, as a result of criticism and suggestions from within, it has become more focused and defensible; criticism has enabled the appropriate distancing and refocusing necessary for more defensible theorizing and practices to occur. There is no reason to assume that this development has reached its final point or should stop. Thus, the first part of this paper will look with a critical eye at the strengths and weaknesses of the present paradigm offered to teachers. Next, a new paradigmatic shift, based on an analysis of limitations and strengths of the present perspective, will be suggested. It will be argued that an inviting approach to teaching has the conceptual potential to consider larger and more complex issues, but this will not occur unless those interested in this perspective get both closer to, and distance themselves from, the present conceptualization of the inviting process. Let's now turn to

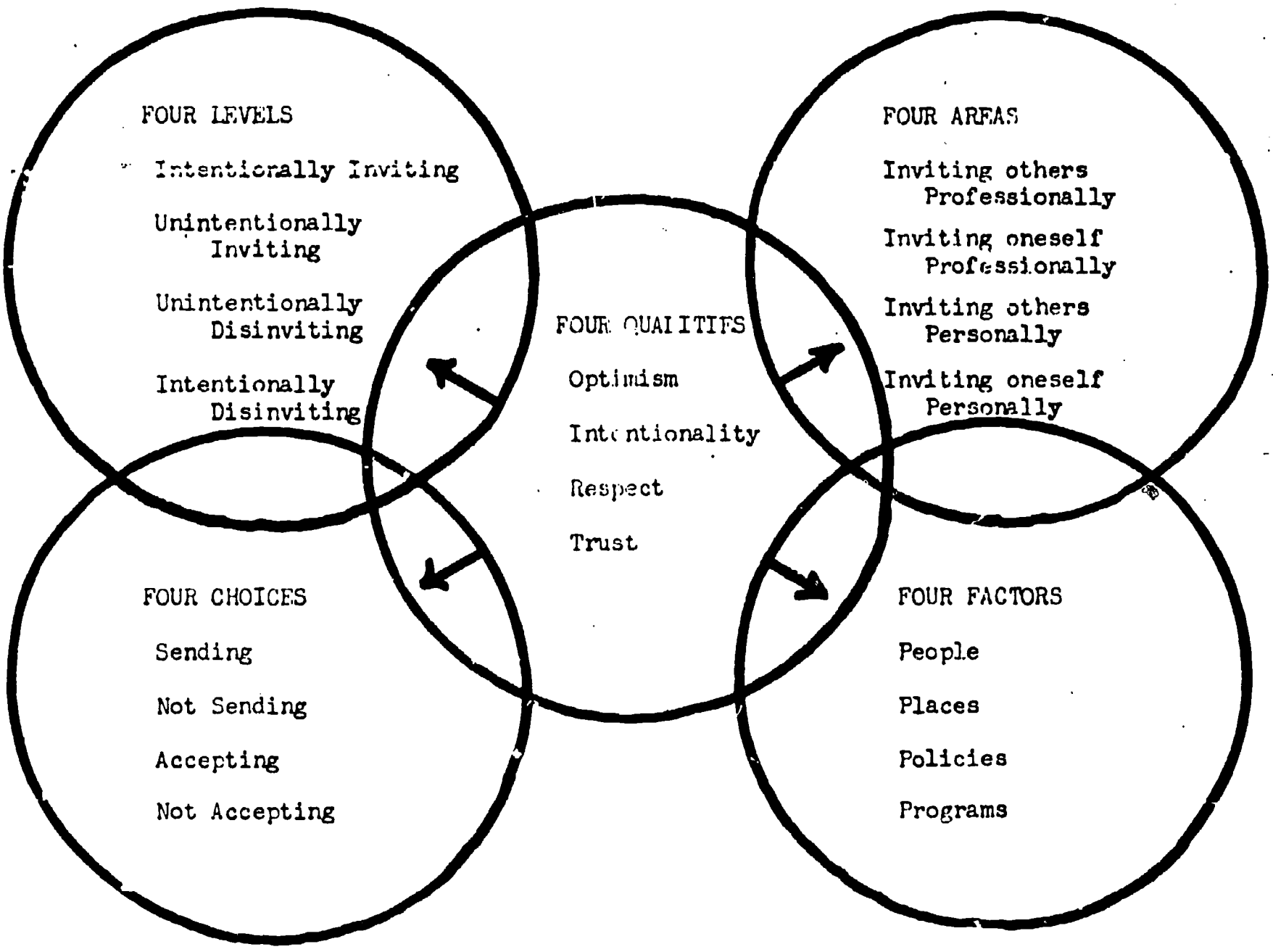
the present paradigm.

The Current Invitational Model

In attempting to provide a "wide-lens" view for working with people, Purkey and Schmidt (in progress) present "a description of what people, places, policies and programs should do and be to benefit human existence and facilitate human development" (p. 12). This they call the invitational model.

It is claimed that this model (Figure "1"), in emphasizing assumptions for human development, factors for consideration, levels of professional functioning, areas of being inviting, and choices of interacting, has implications for professionals in a variety of settings, including education. According to this approach, what teachers should be about is applying the invitational model to classrooms and schools. That this model can be used by teachers is not to be doubted. What it neglects, however, needs to be pointed out.

The invitational model developed by Purkey and Schmidt gives teachers a general approach to dealing with people and institutions that can then be applied to their school work. Implied in using this model in this way is the notion that teaching is, with only slight differences, like any other helping profession. "Parts is parts" and the only real difference will be in the area of inviting others professionally. Certainly for some teachers this model can provide a general plan and reminder of important considerations to be attending to. But for others engaged in teaching it does not go far enough. It leaves up in the air the essential question - "invitations to what?". For invitations to be brought down to earth for teachers, and for the inviting process to remain pedagogically fresh, a more sensitive model is needed, one which



THE INVITATIONAL MODEL

Figure 1

does justice to the "stuff" and implications of educating: teaching, learning, curriculum, and governance (Gowin, 1981; Novak, 1984; Novak and Gowin, 1984).

Recent work (Chamberlin, 1981; Egan, 1983; Gowin, 1981; Novak and Gowin, 1984; Tom, 1984) in educational theory has emphasized the distinct elements of educative activities. It is the contention of these theorists that there is something unique and important in educative events that is neglected in a grafted approach; educative events cannot be reduced to something else without doing violence to the integrity of the experience. This is especially important for invitational educators who, because of their positive and practical intentions, need to be constantly on the alert for unintentionally sugar-coating the status quo.

Without a defensible approach to educating, the invitational model runs the risk of merely sugar-coating current school practices. Sugar coating, the addition of a sweet surface to a bitter pill, can take attention away from the substance of what is being ingested and the underlying ailment. Surely such an intention is neither inviting nor educative, for both are dependent on self-reflective and constructively critical dimensions not found on the surface. This needs further elaboration.

If the inviting approach is to avoid the pitfall of enthusiastically endorsing whatever is current in school practice, it needs to go below the surface to the unacknowledged inner workings of seeking to act positively and deeply. The necessary tension to sustain a positive and penetrating focus can be suggested in the following 2 x 2 diagram.

Generating emphasis

Perceptual focus		positive	negative
	Selective	A Constructing	B Critiquing
	Total	C Sugar Coating	D Despairing

Briefly each block represents a relationship between a generating emphasis and perceptual focus. Block "A" is positive and selective. It stresses getting closer to a situation so as to build on the positive. Block "B", the critical perspective, emphasizes what is lacking or is negated in a multi-dimensional situation. Block "C" is sugar coating - saying yes to all. Block "D" is despairing - saying no to all.

Assuming that a basic perspective is always in relationship with another basic perspective then the relationship necessary for the inviting perspective is A↔B: the tension between what can be built on in a specific situation and what is lacking or going wrong. Attempting to ignore what is negative runs the risk of getting hooked in the A↔C relation and affirming too much. Being only critical runs the risk of getting hooked on the B↔D relationship and negating too much. If the necessary perspective for inviting is the A↔B relationship, then this can be greatly aided by a conceptualization which makes clear and concrete the connection between what is to be affirmed and negated. By seeing how inviting is an integral part of educative events a deeper and more selective affirmation and negation can be developed. Such a perspective could certainly be useful to down to earth teachers.

Inviting Educative Events

In the film "In Search of Excellence" Disneyland is chosen as an

exemplary mass service provider. It works by defining itself as being in "showbusiness" and making sure that everyone and everything presented to the public is part of the show. The employees are seen as the cast and the patrons are the audience. It is essential that the cast never breaks character. Their raison d'etre is to make sure that the audience is made to feel comfortable and special. Nothing is left to chance. Friendly, smiling, polite people run a smooth and efficient enterprise that attracts people from around the world. Can this model work in schools? Should this be a model for educating?

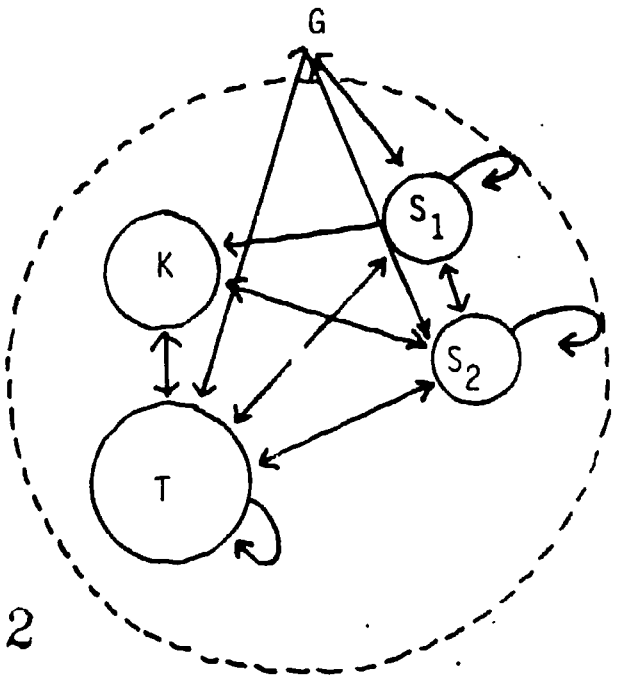
Certainly Disneyland is an improvement over many stereotypical carnivals. Because of its success other such enterprises have had to clean up their acts. Perhaps it can provide some useful principles and suggestions to those committed to the "mass-service" business. To the extent that educators share this task, this can be useful. But schools are not amusement parks and the artful massification of service provision would tend to get stale when applied to people who come there every day to learn the delicate and precarious task of more meaningfully sorting out the world together. The commitment of inviting teachers involves more than the creation of "Epcot Centre" classrooms.

What are teachers supposed to be about? This section will argue that their primary function as teachers is to invite educative events. This involves an understanding of educative events and the necessary relationships involved in the teaching process. Let's now look at this in more detail.

Joseph Novak and D. Bob Gowin in their studies of educating (Gowin, 1981; Novak, 1977; Novak and Gowin, 1984) stress the event nature of educative experiences. By this I take them to mean that educative experiences, the felt significance of being able to more

meaningfully and defensibly sort out events, are events which occur in formal settings when four irreducible and distinct commonplaces, teaching, learning, curriculum, and governance, are intentionally brought together. From this point of view, we are participants in an eventful world where education is the intentional construction of events so that other events can be understood and acted upon. In formal settings this involves a teacher's achieving shared meaning with students and the "teacher's obligation to set the agenda and to decide what knowledge might be considered and in what sequence" (Novak and Gowin, 1984, p. 6); the learner choosing to reconstruct his or her experiences as a result of meaningful interaction with teachers and knowledge; the curriculum composed of "knowledge, skills and values of the educative experience that meet criteria of excellence that make them worthy of study" (Novak and Gowin, 1984, p. 6); the governance or milieu which "describe those factors that control the meaning of the educative experience" (Novak and Gowin, 1984, p. 6). This is quite a mouthful, but it can be unpacked by paying attention to the nature of the various relationships involved in the basic notion that educative events involve someone teaching something of worth to somebody in a particular context. Diagrammatically this can be shown as follows:

T = Teacher
$S_{1,2}$ = Students
K = World of and for knowledge
G = Governance



According to this diagram, teachers are involved in direct relationships to self, students, knowledge, and governance; they also need to pay attention to the relationships of students to themselves, each other, knowledge, and governance. Obviously this can become even more complex. Rather than adding to mechanical intricacy, however, let me now turn to two recent books which can connect this model to the inviting process.

Nel Noddings' book Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education (1984) and Richard Bernstein's Beyond objectivism and relativism: Science, hermeneutics, and praxis (1983) furnish distinct but complementary analyses which can inform the notion of inviting educative events. They can provide a way to go deeper into, and also move beyond, the present conceptualization.

Turning first to Noddings (1984) work, a strong case is made for the importance and development of the caring impulse and its necessary relationship to teaching. Arguing against the dominant ethical systems based on hierarchical principles and abstract judgement she presents an approach "rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (p. 2). She provides an ethic of caring, one in which "relation will be taken as ontologically basic and the caring relation as ethically basic" (p. 3). By this she means that "we recognize human encounter and affective response as a basic fact of human existence" (p. 4) and guard against that which "moves discussion beyond the sphere of actual human activity and the feeling that persuades such activity" (p. 1). Thus, staying in touch with the reality of relations is vital for her ethic of caring.

In distinguishing her approach from other subjective approaches she is worth quoting at length:

> An important difference between an ethic of caring and other ethics that give subjectivity its proper place is its foundation in relation. The philosopher who begins with a supremely free consciousness - an aloneness and emptiness at the heart of existence - identifies *anguish* as the basic human affect. But our view, rooted as it is in relation, identifies *joy* as a basic human affect. When I look at my child - even one of my grown children - and recognize the fundamental relation in which we are each defined, I often experience a deep and overwhelming joy. It is the recognition of and longing for relatedness that form the foundation of our ethic, and the joy that accompanies fulfillment of our caring enhances our commitment to the ethical ideal that sustains us as one-caring.
>
> (p. 6)

Embedded in this statement is an emphasis on the experiencing of joy, interdependence, and the development of the ethical ideal that come from caring. This has important implications for invitational education.

Invitational education, as I see it, is rooted in a caring relationship: people who matter send us messages that we matter. Without the natural joy that comes from such a relationship, inviting educative events would tend to become a chore that would probably, over time, be perceived as forced and artificial - something less than inviting. Obviously all teaching encounters are not joyful, but they are more likely to be so when people see that we are on their side. This takes time to develop and there are no guarantees that it will actually come to fruition. What sustains the caring in situations like this is, in Noddings' terms:

> ... this ethical ideal, this realistic picture of ourselves as one-caring, that guides us as we strive to meet the other morally. Everything depends upon the nature and strength of this ideal, for we shall not have absolute principles to guide us.
>
> (p. 5)

This ethical ideal is no mere abstract moral principle for Noddings. Rather, it is a picture of goodness that develops as a result of the

dynamics of a person's ethical self. Noddings vividly describes this ethical self as,

> ... an active relation between my actual self and a vision of my ideal self as one-caring and cared-for. It is born of the fundamental recognition of relatedness; that which connects me naturally to the other, reconnects me through the other to myself. As I care for others and am cared for by them, I become able to care for myself. The characteristic "I must" arises in connection with this other in me, this ideal self, and I respond to it. It is this caring that sustains me when caring for the other fails, and it is this caring that enables me to surpass my actual uncaring self in the direction of caring.
>
> (pp. 49-50)

For teachers, this ethical self develops as we care for and are received by others in our pedagogical caring and as we seek, and are receptive to ideas.

In taking to heart Noddings' approach to ethics and education the notion of being inviting to oneself and others, personally and professionally, can be seen in a more intimate and connecting light. When this is connected to Richard Bernstein's (1983) work, a deeper and more social imperative for inviting educative events develops.

As the diagram on page 9 pointed out, the teacher's relationship to the world of and for knowledge is essential to educative events. Richard Bernstein provides a provocative analysis of the nature of knowledge which should have serious implications for educating.

According to Bernstein, "we are witnessing and participating in a movement beyond objectivism and relativism" (p. 49). By that he means a way of speaking about human rationality is emerging, a conversation stressing knowledge which is neither absolute nor relative but based on human communal judgement developed in and through undistorted communication. Simply stated, practical rationality is the best means available for understanding the human situation and it develops best in situations

where "individuals confront each other as equals and participants" (p. 223). As Bernstein stresses, this way of coming to know has practical and political consequences in that it draws "us toward the goal of cultivating the types of dialogical communities in which phronēsis, judgement, and practical discourse become concretely embodied in our everyday practices" (p. 223). Thus according to Bernstein, coming to rational terms with the world we share is not a neutral or narrowly technical affair. It involves the development of human judgement which comes through rational argumentation and "always presupposes the plurality of opinions that are tested and purified in communal debate" (p. 223). It comes out of common sense, defined "literally as the sense it takes to live in a commons" (Giarelli, 1985, p. 5). It points to a society which aims at and uses rational persuasion.

Bernstein's work is a complex and creative synthesis of major contemporary philosophers. Certainly it and its educational implications are open to rational debate. What it does suggest, however, is that those interested in inviting educative events need to pay attention to issues relating to the nature of knowledge construction and the type of society necessitated by such knowledge construction. Taking seriously the question "Invitations to what?" means that teachers seriously question the knowledge and society they are encouraging participation in. To uncritically accept that both are the best of all possible worlds is to be limited to sugar coating and be unnecessarily restrained in vision and invitations.

Connecting the work of Noddings and Bernstein is no easy task. When seen from the perspective of inviting educative events it could be said that Noddings points out the importance of knowing about caring and Bernstein shows us the necessity of caring about knowing. Both

stress the basic relational nature of human existence and the importance of calling forth, not shunning, human potential. Noddings gets us closer to the inner dynamics of the inviting process and Bernstein points us to its implications. This intimacy and distancing is needed to get down to earth about inviting. It is needed to provide teachers with a more defensible theory of educational practice.

Conclusion

> As philosophers, our disagreements with one another as to conclusions are trivial in comparison with our disagreements as to problems; to see the problem another sees, in the same perspective and at the same angle - that amounts to something. Agreement as to conclusions is in comparison perfunctory.
>
> John Dewey

Invitational education is open to different interpretations and applications. This paper has attempted to show that a critique of the invitational model applied to schools is necessary because, although that approach may be a useful beginning in getting teachers to "clean up their acts", it does not go deep enough into the specific context and implications of teaching. Invitations are always to something and thus it is essential for teachers that the distinct nature of educative events as described by Gowin (1981) be emphasized. An inviting theory of educational practice, informed by the concept of caring developed by Nel Noddings (1984) and the social-judgemental nature of knowledge suggested by Richard Bernstein (1983), was provided. Is this theory of practise inviting?

In the manuscript for Counseling: An invitational approach, Purkey and Schmidt (in progress) provide four questions to use in determining if a theory or technique can be integrated with an inviting framework. First they ask, "Is there a perceptual orientation?". The

inviting theory of educational practice suggested emphasizes the care and development of the perceptual world of people as they participate in educative events. Being educated involves the felt significance of being able to more meaningfully sort out and participate in the world. Certainly this is both perceptual and empowering. The theory of practice suggested also seeks to better understand the relationship between the perceptual orientation and the societal structures sustained by human participation.

Next, Purkey and Schmidt ask, "Is there an emphasis on the self?". Noddings' ethical self was strongly emphasized in the inviting theory of practice. Bernstein's approach to knowledge centred on the active role of people in determining their direction. However, it must be stressed that the self-in-relation, as opposed to the self-in-isolation, was the foundation for an inviting approach to educative events.

A third question asked by Purkey and Schmidt is "Is the approach humanely effective?". Certainly the approach suggested, with its emphasis on the caring and empowering relationship, is humane. Its effectiveness is more difficult to judge because the question "Effective to what end?" needs further clarification. It was the intention of this paper to present an inviting theory of educational practice. It will be successful to the extent that it can be seen by others as pointing to more defensible possibilities and a larger vision. Its effectiveness will have to be judged at a later date.

The final question asked by Purkey and Schmidt, "Does the approach encourage applicability?" would seem to get an affirmative answer. It is intended to be a theory of practice - a way of thinking and doing something regarding what we ought to be about as teachers. It is hoped that it can inform the immediate actions and long term

projects of teachers.

With affirmative answers to the four questions posed by Purkey and Schmidt the theory of practice described in this paper can be shown to be acceptably inviting. That is important because it is not intended to be in opposition to their model but rather to be a vehicle for considering deeper and specific issues for educators. May the conversation on the theory and practice of invitational education continue.

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